



FALCO FRONTATUS, *Gould.*

White-fronted Falcon.

Falco frontatus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 139.

Wow-oo, Aborigines of the Murray in Western Australia.

Little Falcon, Colonists of Western Australia.

THIS, one of the least of the true Falcons found in Australia, is universally spread over the southern portion of that country, including Van Diemen's Land and the islands in Bass's Straits. As its long pointed wings clearly indicate, it possesses great and rapid powers of flight; and I have frequently been amused by pairs of this bird following my course over the plains for days together, in order to pounce down on the Quails as they rose before me. If I had wished to witness Falconry in perfection I could not have had a better opportunity than on these occasions, when it was interesting to observe how instinctively the Falcons performed their gyrations just above the dogs, in preparation for the stoop; and on those vast plains where there was not a tree or any other object to obstruct either the flight of the bird or our view of the chase, nothing could be more beautiful in its way than the actions of this species when pursuing the swift-flying Quail, which, although quickly overtaken, often evades the stroke of its enemy by suddenly dropping to the ground among the grasses.

The White-fronted Falcon is not a migratory species in any of the colonies. I succeeded in finding several of its nests, both in Van Diemen's Land and on the continent: the situations of all those I observed were near the tops of the most lofty and generally inaccessible trees; they were rather large structures, being fully equal in size to that of a Crow, slightly concave in form, outwardly built of sticks, and lined with the inner bark of trees and other soft materials: the eggs are either two or three in number, of a light buff, blotched and marbled all over with dark buff, one inch and ten lines long by one inch and four lines broad.

The stomach is rather muscular and capacious, and its food consists of small birds and insects.

Forehead greyish white; crown of the head, cheeks, ear-coverts, and all the upper surface uniform dark bluish grey; internal webs of the primaries, except the tips, numerous barred with oval-shaped markings of buff; two centre tail-feathers grey, transversely barred with obscure markings of black; the remainder of the feathers on each side alternately barred with lines of dark grey and reddish chestnut; throat and chest white, tinged with buff, the feathers of the chest marked down the centre with a stripe of brown; the whole of the under surface and thighs dull reddish orange; irides blackish brown; bill bluish lead-colour, becoming black at the tip; cere, base of the upper mandible, legs and feet yellow; claws black.

The sexes exhibit the usual difference in size, the female being much the largest. The plumage of the young differs from that of the adult in being more rusty and the markings less defined, in the feathers of the wings and tail being margined with rufous, and in the whole of the under surface being washed more deeply with rufous than the adult.

The Plate represents an adult and young bird of the natural size.